



The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

NAMI- New Mexico

New Mexico's Voice on Mental Illness

February 21, 2011

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*Sidonie Squire, Cabinet Secretary Designee
Human Services Department
2209 Pacheco, Pollon Plaza
Santa Fe, NM 87504*

Dear Secretary Designee Squire,

National Alliance on Mental Illness-New Mexico, (NAMI-NM) is writing in regard to our objections of OptumHealth's recent implementation of "clinical triggers" or criteria to outpatient services. Some of these services include Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, Behavior Management Services, Individual and Family Therapy, Comprehensive Community Support Services and other Outpatient Services that are still to be identified.

Behavioral Health Providers were informed on December 29, 2010, that OptumHealth would be undergoing an enhancement that would "systematically" apply general clinical standards to outpatient services. The alert emphasized the need to submit accurate claims and provided denial codes that would be used with this "enhancement". The notice indicated that the enhancement would be effective for services rendered January 1, 2011. The notification did not list the outpatient service or the criteria that was applied to each service. Consequently in mid January providers and consumers began to experience numerous denials for community based services that have been provided to severely mentally ill adults and serious emotionally disturbed children.

Consumers and families were not notified by OptumHealth of the impact that this reduction would have on services that have kept them stable in their communities and schools. The loss in revenue to providers is extensive and many have begun the process of laying-off employees, reducing services, and putting the behavioral health system at risk of providers collapsing.

Providers have had several meetings with OptumHealth and Linda Roebuck Homer to discuss this issue and have submitted written request for a moratorium of this decision and asking that providers be reimbursed for services rendered. The Provider community has asked for a list of the clinical criteria and repeatedly warned OptumHealth and the Collaborative about the hardship to consumers and families. OptumHealth did provide a list of the clinical trigger criteria to a few providers but did not allow them to distribute to others because the list is considered "proprietary". Providers need the procedure codes and clinical criteria to determine how to implement the changes in their practices.

It is our understanding that the strategic plan for behavioral health services was to increase community based services and reduce residential and inpatient treatment. NAMI-NM has supported this approach providing that Community Based Services continued to increase and improve the lives of our children and families. This new approach is causing great concern since it now appears that there is a concerted effort to reduce services critical to our consumers and family's recovery and contradictory to the New Mexico Strategic Plan for Behavioral Health Services.

Providers, consumers and families have also reported that it is unclear as to who made this decision. Concern has been expressed that OptumHealth was given a directive from the Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative to implement this reduction for the purpose of cost containment. If this is accurate then we would propose that it would be more constructive to meet with providers, consumers and families to determine the least disruptive approach to reducing costs. NAMI-NM has always been ready and willing to work with leadership in addressing these issues.

NAMI-NM supports New Mexico Youth Alliance and Adult Provider Association in requesting that New Mexico direct OptumHealth to postpone this "enhancement" and give providers an opportunity to review the clinical criteria, inform all those who will be affected by this measure and allow time for clinical and financial planning in operations. NAMI is strongly recommending the following:

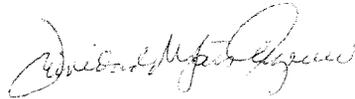
- 1) Award providers the monies earned during the time period that the new triggers went into effect.*
- 2) Require OptumHealth to publish the triggers for all providers so that they know what services will be cut before they provide those services and incur non-reimbursable costs.*
- 3) Investigate why the State has been slow in responding to the concerns of the provider community and what part the State employees played in the implementation of the plan*

NAMI-NM supports cost containment and accountability in delivering evidenced based practice. We are ready and willing to work in partnership with the Collaborative and OptumHealth to address these issues and develop a systems improvement approach in making changes necessary for cost effective treatment. However, these issues should be addressed in a methodical and systematic way so that we do not create harm to clients, providers, employees, community stakeholders and all those involved in a change of this magnitude.

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We are also expecting that OptumHealth and Behavioral Health Interagency Purchasing Collaborative give immediate notification to consumers and families of this change. Failure to provide notice of changes is inconsistent with concept of fair play.

Respectfully,



*Trinidad de Jesus Arguello, President
National Alliance on Mental Illness-New Mexico*

*xc: Linda Roebuck Homer, CEO IBHPC
Keith Gardner, Governor's Chief of Staff
Dr. Torres, Secretary Designee, Department of Health
New Mexico State Senators
New Mexico House of Representatives
New Mexico Youth Alliance
Adult Provider Association
New Mexico Attorney General Office
Legislative Finance Committee
Ron Honberg, NAMI National*

